

REMARKS

In the above-noted Final Official Action, the Examiner rejected claims 1, 3, 8 and 14 under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) over JP 7-245092. Claims 10-11 were previously withdrawn as being drawn to non-elected claims. Claims 4-7, 9, 12 and 13 were objected-to for depending from a rejected base claim, but were otherwise indicated as allowable if amended to include substantially all of the features of base and any intervening claims. Claim 15 was indicated as allowable. Additionally, the Examiner issued an Advisory Action on April 28, 2004 in which entry of amendments to claim 1, submitted in a Response filed on April 19, 2004 under 37 C.F.R. §1.116, was refused as raising new issues that would require further consideration and/or search.

Upon entry of the present amendment, Applicants will have cancelled claims 1-3, 8, 10-11 and 14 without prejudice to or disclaimer of the subject matter recited therein. Claims 4, 7, 9, 12 and 13 will have each been amended into independent form to include substantially all of the limitations of base and intervening claims. Applicants note that claims 5-6 each depend from claim 4. Accordingly, in view of the Examiner's previous indication of the allowability of claims 4-7, 9, 12 and 13, if rewritten into independent form to include all of the features recited in base and intervening claims, Applicants respectfully submit that each of these claims is now in condition for allowance. Additionally, claim 15 was

previously indicated as being in condition for allowance. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully request an indication of the allowability of each of the claims now pending.

Applicants submit that cancellation of claims by the present response should not be considered an indication of acquiescence as to the propriety of the outstanding rejections, or the restriction requirement first set forth on November 17, 2001 which resulted previously in the withdrawal of claims 10-11. In particular, claims similar to claims 10 and 11 were submitted in a divisional application (U.S. Patent Application No. 10/455,345, filed June 6, 2003). Additionally, claims similar to cancelled claims 1-3, 8 and 14, as submitted in the above-noted Response filed on April 19, 2004, may be submitted in continuation application claiming priority of the instant application.

Applicants further submit that entry of the present amendments is believed to be proper, though the present application is subject to final rejection. In particular, Applicants submit that the amendments contained herein do not present new issues for consideration by the Examiner. Rather, the amendments to claims 4, 7, 9, 12 and 13 merely place dependent claims into independent form to include substantially all of the features of base and intervening claims. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully request entry of the present amendment, though the present application is subject to final rejection.

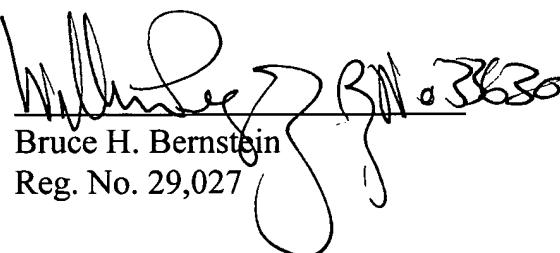
SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Applicants have made a sincere effort to place the present application in condition for allowance and believe that they have now done so. Applicants have cancelled rejected claims without prejudice to or disclaimer of the subject matter recited therein. Additionally, Applicants have amended objected-to dependent claims into independent form. Accordingly, Applicants have provided a clear evidentiary basis supporting the patentability of all the claims in the present application and respectfully request an indication to such effect.

Any amendments which have been made in this amendment, and which have not been specifically noted to overcome a rejection based upon the prior art, should be considered to have been made for a purpose unrelated to patentability, and no estoppel should be deemed to attach thereto.

Should there be any questions or comments regarding this Response, the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned at the below-listed telephone number.

Respectfully submitted,
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